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AUTHOR Holmes, Manford L.
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ABSTRACT

One of the aims of the Documentation and Technical Assistance (DTA) Project is to apply educational information that has been utilized for problem solving in one organization to other settings with their own unique characteristics. Within the staff of the DTA project, the position of Technical Assistance-Documentation Linker (TA-Doc Linker) was created for this purpose. This paper examines the manner in which the TA-Doc Linkers from the Chicago, Illinois, and the Eugene, Oregon/Oakland, California, technical assistance regions have developed their roles. Structural and interactional aspects of the roles played by these staff members are described and brief background on the features of each region's technical assistance efforts is offered. The Eugene/Oakland project is characterized as reflecting solidarity and mutual support within the DTA team, while the Chicago region is said to have emphasized contacts between DTA staff and people from the school sites where problem solving was applied. In contrasting differences between the two TA-Doc Linkers' approaches, two factors are cited as important: (1) geography, as a potential aid or handicap to information flow; and (2) assumptions and beliefs regarding the differential use of face to face information. It is stressed, however, that both TA-Doc Linkers succeeded in maximizing the use of information from the nine research sites being studied by the documentation team.
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TA-DOC LINKER ROLE

Manford L. Holmes

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This paper is part of the Documentation and Technical Assistance Project of the Center for New Schools, 59 East Van Buren Street, Chicago, Illinois and of the Center for Education Policy and Management, 1472 Kincaid Street, Eugene, Oregon. This project is funded by the School Capacity for Problem Solving Program of the National Institute of Education, Contract #400-75-0018. The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect views of that agency.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Documentation and Technical Assistance in Urban Schools Project (DTA) is an effort to learn more about how to make urban public schools work better for urban students. Toward this end, DTA combines educational research and practice within one project. DTA's mandate has three interrelated parts:

> DOCUMENTATION - to study, using primarily ethnographic techniques, the ways in which selected urban schools organize themselves to solve problems. Documentation focuses upon nine sites throughout the country selected and funded by NIE to continue to engage in locally initiated improvement activities.
>
> TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - to develop in practice specific strategies which are designed to improve urban public schooling. Technical assistance strategies are based in part upon documentation of useful practices in the nine funded sites.
>
> LINKAGE - to increase understanding, through observation of DTA's attempts to link documentation with technical assistance, of the processes through which research can be useful to practice, and practice can influence research.

Our work is designed to effect school improvement through direct work in urban public schools and through sharing what we learn with the following audiences: parents, teachers, and administrators of urban public schools; the educational research community; groups or agencies working to assist urban schools; policy makers.

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A major charge of the Documentation and Technical Assistance (DTA) Project is to test whether or not it is possible to take educational information about organizational capacity for problem solving from one setting and use it to increase substantially the problem solving capacity of other settings which have their own unique characteristics. The Technical Assistance-Documentation Linker role (TA-DOC Linker role) was created to help with implementation of this charge. This paper will look at the manner in which the DTA project has adapted the roles of two staff members, to support ongoing efforts to make educational information from one place useful to people in another place. It focuses upon structural and interactional aspects of the role within one project.

History of the Development of the TA-DOC Linker Role

The primary activity of the first of our work (January, 1975 through Spetember, 1976), besides establishing and refining the DTA organization to support its work, was the gathering of problem solving capacity information from nine previously selected educational settings.* The primary research component of DTA is the Documentation Team, charged to collect, organize, analyze, and prepare for use the qualitative data gathered by nine site researchers (SRs). The Documentation Team's research coordinators and site researchers discussed through face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations the information the SRs were collecting and the themes that were emerging across sites. As the information was being collected and analysis begun, plans began for establishing structures to determine the usefulness of the information for school people in other settings.

*See Wilson, T., 1977 for general background on the history, time line, approach, purposes, and organizational structure of DTA.

Initially a single technical assistance team was created to plan work with school communities which the team identified as promising sites for applying some of the nine funded sites information gathered by the Documentation Team. Two separate technical assistance regions, one in Chicago and one in Oakland, developed from the one technical assistance team at the same time that it became clearer what types of roles, communication mechanisms, and other structures would be necessary to support the work of selectively applying research site information to the differing needs of both sites*

It also became clearer that the school people with whom the assistance teams were working already had some definite experience-based ideas about what educational strategies would or would not work. Thus, the need for face-to-face contact within the technical assistance group(s) and between the technical assistance team and school people, problems of communication logistics, the differing realities and needs of the assistance sites, and the differing expectations of people at the assistance sites, all contributed to the decision to establish two distinct technical assistance regions for the next phase of the project's work (October, 1976 through January, 1978).

This paper concentrates on the adaptations the project made to match the roles of two individuals with the needs of the two technical assistance regions. The TA-DOC Linker role was created to make information from research effort available in the variety of forms to the assistance

*See Holmes, 1977 for a discussion of the importance of face-to-face communication of information within the DTA project, especially in meeting the information needs of school practitioners.

team members. Initially the role was conceived as a way of developing procedures and activities that would make information easily accessible to assistance team members. It became apparent that it also was important to have someone available to the assistance team members who would spend a major portion of his or her time matching assistance site needs with information that was being gathered in the project. The creation of the TA-DOC Linker role allowed other assistance team members to focus their energies on the assistance sites where they were expected to go out into the field, make observations of their own, build solid rapport, inquire about what the assistance site people wanted and needed, and create effective assistance strategies. Each team member did not have to be personally aware what information and sources of information were available from the project's continually expanding research effort. Individuals were chosen for the TA-DOC Linker role who had a good understanding of the types of data the DTA already had acquired and could both keep up with the increasing information and analysis about the nine funded sites and readily identify the human resources who could be contacted by assistance team members to provide access to that information.

In planning the role it was anticipated that the TA-DOC Linker would primarily be responsive to requests for kinds and sources of information, but also would take initiatives in discussing ideas and strategies with others on the assistance teams. For instance, assistance people might say to the Linker, "X school considers that it has a problem of too little parent participation. How in the nine sites have principals and teachers gone about getting parents involved? Where can we get this information from the documentary and human resources of the project?" Or, the TA-DOC Linker might approach the other assistance team members with an idea or

observation from her or his acquaintance with the research effort which might pertain to one or more of the sites with which the team was engaged. For instance, "Y site has a very successful open corridor program which Terry, Steve, and Chitra know a lot about. Since you are planning assistance in developing an open corridor program at Z school, I think you should talk with them."

The Chicago and Eugene/Oakland technical assistance regions have each tailored their TA-Doc Linker roles to meet their own specific needs. The next two sections of the paper describe and analyze how the role has been developed and used in the two regions. Then, some of the similarities and differences in the role as it is being implemented in the two regions are highlighted. The concluding section raises some of the issues to consider in implementing the TA-Doc Linker role within the DTA project.

TA-Doc Linker Role: Eugene/Oakland Region

The Eugene/Oakland Region has grown out of the past experience and work of Strategies for Organizational Change (SOC), a research and development program in the Center for Educational Policy and Management (CEPM) of the University of Oregon at Eugene. The DTA work of the Eugene/Oakland Region has become part of an ongoing effort of individuals at SOC to spread knowledge of and new perspectives on the use of organizational development in the field of education. Some members of the Eugene/Oakland Region teach courses as well as carry out other research at the University or Oregon.

Phil Runkel, the Eugene/Oakland TA-Doc Linker, is an integral part of the technical assistance team. He has carried out or been involved in several other research and organizational development efforts at SOC.

In harmony with SOC's organizational philosophy wherein, great emphasis is placed upon the importance ofthe team working together as a whole, the Eugene/Oakland Region individual staff roles are designed to support the work of the group as a whole. The TA-Doc Linker role is no exception in that it was planned to reflect the team's needs in the following ways.

The role would allow Phil, who had a greater working knowledge of the work of the Documentation Team than any other member of the Eugene/Oakland staff, to maximize the amount of time he spent in face-to-face communication with the other team members based in Eugene, while using the knowledge he had gained in his previous project work. At one point in the project's history Phil had spent the bulk of his time talking with people from other parts of the project, rather than with project members working in the office where he is located. At that time Phil was the only Eugene-based member of the project-wide Documentation Team and was a research coordinator for three site researchers.

The Region staff recognized the need for the TA-Doc Linker role to be filled by someone who would work closely and effectively with the other members of the assistance team. Many of the Region staff had developed close, trusting, and effective working relationships--in some cases over years. The quality, openness, and developed trust of the team working collaboratively was viewed as an essential ingredient for doing the work. An outsider could not have as successfully filled the TA-Doc Linker role at Eugene/Oakland. Phil, besides being most knowledgeable about the research component of DTA, was already a solid and respected member and leader of the Region team.

Since the role of TA-Doc Linker was created to meet the needs of the assistance work, all other roles were structured to allow time for interaction to respond to requests and exchange information about the project's research work. Considerable time for discussion and team building in Eugene was deliberately planned for the second phase of the work.

The Region's delineation of the TA-Doc Linker role in its plans for the second phase of the work (in Wilson, T., 1976) stressed the overall responsibility for linkage and initiative-taking expectations for Phil in this role ( ):

> Phil Runkel, as the DOC-TA Linker will take overall responsibility for helping the team retrieve relevant information from the nine sites and from other projects. He will take initiative in bringing information, people and materials to the team that will help in our self-diagnosis and in our designing innovative technical assistance. (p. 135).

In comparing the role projections to Phil's actual activities, the Study Team has found that the Eugene-based part of the team does place considerable importance on the relationships of individual team members to each other and to the team as a whole. The team consistently stresses, and acts on, the basis of being able to function as a mutually supportive group. Phil's presence in the TA-Doc Linker role not only supports the documentation linkage needs of the team, but also supports the kind of social unit the team requires for all its work.

Each member of the Eugene/Oakland team was involved to some degree in the process of providing services to school people in Oakland. In the Eugene/Oakland Region, however, the assistance sites are located in Oakland, while most of the assisters are based in Eugene. The two Oakland-based members of the assistance team, who were two of the newest members

of the team, knew the least about how to use the research information resources of DTA and the most about the day-to-day realities of the Oakland sites. Seeing Phil only infrequently, they did not understand that his role was designed to assist them in matching research site information to assistance site needs.

The fact of the considerable geographical separation of the bulk of the assistance team from the assistance target sites, not only has shaped the nature of the assistance activities being attempted, but also has had an impact on the TA-Doc Linker role. The fact of geographical separation constrains the use of time in Oakland, limiting the extent and responsiveness of face-to-face interaction there. While geography has not constrained the TA-Doc Linker's interactions with other Eugene-based members of the assistance team, and may even have enhanced that interaction, it has limited the occasions for face-to-face interaction with the Oakland-based team members and the school people at the assistance sites.

While Phil has had the responsibility for helping all the team retrieve information from the DTA resources, he was able to be more immediately and extensively responsive to the Eugene-based part of the team than to the two assisters and the assistance site people in Oakland. In some cases Eugene-based team members retrieved information on their own, using Phil where possible, as one resource in their retreival initiatives. In other cases Phil directed or initiated the information retreival process.

The major retrieval initiative undertaken by Phil was a significant computer inquiry in which we achieved access to stored data about experiences at the nine funded sites. While the organizing force behind the design of the inquiry was preparation for a major theoretical paper, the inquiry

resulted in the reference book which became available at the Eugene office. Phil took the book with him when he attended a New York DTA Region seminar to share it with the New York Documentation staff and several site researchers who were present. He also read and analyzed early nine sites case study drafts and encouraged his Region team members to read them.

Because of his extensive skill and experience, and the profoundly collaborative nature of the style of work of the Eugene-based part of the team, Phil's role in practice was larger than that of simply being the linkage person between DTA's research work and one of its technical assistance efforts. Phil's work also included:

- Observing assistance activities in Oakland.
- Meeting face-to-face with school people in Oakland to assist in planning assistance activities.
- Providing assistance to school people in Oakland on team building.
- Assisting Eugene/Oakland team members in writing team products.
- Photographing some of the activities of the assistance team.

Being one of the Eugene/Oakland Region's most knowledgeable people in the area of organizational development, one of the major themes of the Eugene/Oakland region, Phil also made workshop presentations and worked with small groups to share information on this topic.

The role of TA-Doc Linker in the Eugene/Oakland Region is currently viewed as very useful to the work of the team. The role has been developed to support the work of the team, and the people in Eugene feel that it has succeeded for several reasons. Phil has had more time to interact with team members than he did in his work in the previous phase. In carrying

out the various tasks which it designed for the second phase of its work, the team has been able to flexibly match needs and staff within the Region. While Phil has been the primary linkage person for the Region, others have taken linkage initiatives, and Phil has engaged himself with more than linking activities. In practicing role sharing to support the whole team effort, the Region assigns some tasks such as the recording of minutes on a rotating basis involving the entire Eugene-based team.

In implementing the TA-Doc Linker role, Phil drew on the computer stored data system and encouraged team collaboration through extended face-to-face interaction between Eugene-based team members. The team knew in planning its work that the fact of the distance between Eugene and Oakland would increase the difficulty of doing effective technical assistance work. In fact, the distance did significantly limit the extent of face-to-face exchanges between Phil and the Oakland-based assisters, and people in the schools. The distance factor also increased the extent to which the Eugene-based staff acted as mediators between the documentary and face-to-face sources of information from the nine funded sites and the Oakland-based people and their needs.

TA-Doc Linker Role: Chicago Region

The Chicago Technical Assistance Region is based in the central office of the DTA project at the Center for New Schools (CNS), an organization devoted to combining qualitative research with face-to-face technical assistance to improve the education of urban students. The Chicago Region developed out of the previous work of CNS which had included providing assistance to urban schools and parent groups. While the theme of organizational development has been a major filter and focus of the

Eugene/Oakland technical assistance team, the theme of building on the cultural strengths of members of the school community has informed the Chicago team's work. The Chicago team leader, Frances Holliday, supported by her work at CNS, developed a focus of this theme out of her past extensive experience with urban education.

Like the Eugene/Oakland Region, the Chicago Region needed a person who could be available to assist them in matching nine funded sites information with the needs of the school people with whom they were working. The Chicago Region, however, had the advantage of location in the same office with other DTA staff, including the research coordinators who were both supervisors of site researchers and primary analysts of the research data, and the data coders. They were also located close to the school district being assisted on Chicago's south side.

In the plans for the second phase of the DTA Project, the Chicago Region identified the projected role for the linkage person (in Wilson, T., 1976):

> The Linkage Facilitator...will have major responsibility for effecting linkage between the Documentation Team and the Chicago T.A. Region Team. (p. 155)

The planning document goes on to state that:

> Conceptualization is the process which involves the identification of directions and the generation of hunches which will guide our T.A. effort in Chicago. Based on our knowledge about the needs, concerns, and interests of one network site, our knowledge of nine site experiences, and additional useful data, we will identify the directions or areas of assistance to be pursued in our effort in Chicago. Once we have begun identifying these directions, our Linkage Facilitator will draw upon existing nine site data (and/or initiate requests for new data from the sites) in order to generate a typology of hunches or data-based predictions about the factors which impact upon school problem solving processes. The Linkage Facilitator will provide us with hunches about both general and specific factors which may have a positive or negative impact on problem solving. (p. 157)

Yvonne King, selected as the Chicago TA-Doc Linker for the second phase, had also, like Phil Runkel, worked for the Documentation Team during the first phase. Besides being a research coordinator, she had assisted in creating the project's computer-based data management system. In securing Yvonne as TA-Doc Linker for the Chicago Region, the Region gained the resources of a person who (1) was knowledgeable about and experienced with the project's data system and the work of the Documentation Team, (2) was familiar with the strengths and problems of the technical assistance tradition at CNS, and (3) was committed in her own right to participating in improving the quality of education for urban students.

Yvonne began to carry out her role in the following manner. She discussed the role with other members of the team to gain more clarity about the role and the needs of the team members. She identified for the team members places where different types of information existed, and wrote a description of where the information was and how it could be obtained.* Yvonne also visited six of the research sites to gain more first-hand knowledge about the sites. She initiated inquiries from the computer system, and initiated the development of a system for the Chicago team to share responsibility in the reading of case studies for the purpose of increasing the whole team's understanding of the activities of the nine sites. To facilitate linkage she assisted in arranging for the participation of resource people, both from within the project and from the nine sites, in direct talks with the Chicago team and at workshops involving school people

*The current version of this material is King, 1977.

In her role of TA-Doc Linker Yvonne also has:

- Observed the Chicago assistance team in the field.
- Provided limited direct assistance to school people in the use of photography and used it herself to document some of the activities of the Region staff.
- Assisted as a member of the Chicago team in planning activities for the assistance sites.

The Chicago Region has not achieved the kind of team solidarity and mutual support that the Eugene-based part of the Eugene/Oakland team has developed. In fact, some instances of hard conflict about how to implement the directions of the technical assistance work have erupted within the team during the second phase of its work. One dimension of conflict has arisen between the Team Leader and the TA-Doc Linker, interfering somewhat with achieving the most effective utilization of the Region's talent and energy toward developing strategies for increasing problem solving capacity at the assistance sites. While this conflict has been ideological, such conflicts usually also have a power aspect.

The Chicago Region's theme of building on cultural strengths, along with the extensive urban public school related experience of the team members, contributed to its placing strong emphasis on the team identifying, through extended direct observation and conversation, the problem solving needs of people in the schools. The Region has maximized not only face-to-face exchanges between the Region staff and site people, but also, through the initiative of the TA-Doc Linker, has brought together some of the human resources of the DTA project with people at the sites and with the team itself.

Comparing the TA-Doc Linker Role in the Chicago and Eugene/Oakland Region

In comparing and contrasting the TA-Doc Linker role at Eugene/Oakland and Chicago, the outstanding fact is the similarity of purpose underlying the specific actualizations of the role in the two Regions. In both cases the role was intended to maximize the use of information from the nine research sites being studied by the Documentation Team.

Both teams chose individuals for the Linker role who had served as research coordinators for the Documentation Team and already had extensive significant knowledge of the information from the nine sites which had become available during the first phase of the work. When one compares the activities carried out by the TA-Doc Linkers during Phase II, more similarities stand out. Both made inquiries from the computerized data system. Both observed technical assistance activities carried out by their teams. Both assisted in planning assistance activities. Both provided some direct assistance to school people. Both shared their knowledge with other team members and school practitioners. Both read case studies.

While many minor points of contrast could be developed, because the TA-Doc Linkers were working in different situations, several points of contrast stand out for comment. Because of the fact that neither team drew upon an experience based model for implementing the TA-Doc Linker role, each linker had to actualize and refine his or her own role on the job.

The role potentially could have developed any number of ways, considering both the amount and complexity of the existing and emerging research information and the largely open-ended nature of the technical assistance task, which was to develop and test strategies to improve

problem solving capacity in real schools. In the two Regions different facts and philosophies, priorities and emphases, and therefore different allocations of time, emerged around the different aspects of the role:

- Relationships with other team members.
- Relationships with school people.
- Different ways of using documentary and face-to-face information sources in developing and implementing assistance strategies.
- Initiatives to keep up with new information.
- Initiatives to understand, by direct observation, contexts of both research and assistance sites.
- The extent of mediation by the TA-Doc Linker between nine sites information and the assistance team and by the assistance team between nine sites information and site people.
- Support and authority for the TA-Doc Linker role.

In analyzing the implementation of the TA-Doc Linker role in Eugene/Oakland and Chicago, two, perhaps interconnected, factors may be considered to have been pervasively influential. These two factors are geography, and assumptions and beliefs regarding the differential use of documentary and face-to-face information.

The two Regions contrast significantly when considering geography as a potential aid or handicap to information flow. The Chicago Region, operating out of the centeral DTA office along with the Documentation Team supervisors, primary analysts, and coders, and in the same city as their assistance sites, was in a position to maximize frequent, direct, rapid, and interactive information flow. The central core of the Eugene/Oakland staff, geographically isolated from all other components of the DTA organization, and from the Oakland assistance sites and part of their team, was constrained to operate under a maximum handicap in terms of face-to-face information flow outside of the core group.

An earlier paper (Holmes, 1977) differentiates between documentary sources of information and face-to-face sources. It argues that documentary materials are more frequently developed and used to treat factual and theoretical material, the focus of most educational research, and that face-to-face sources are more readily used by school practitioners, where information pertaining to the lore of groups must be considered. Face-to-face information exchange requires physical proximity. The key members of the Eugene group had built a national reputation from their theoretical writing and from their use, in primarily suburban schools, of certain face-to-face skills around an organizational development approach to school improvement. The varied experiences with urban education of the group of people who came together to form the Chicago Region included less writing and greater emphasis on the usefulness, and in certain assistance situations (i.e., entry) the necessity, for using a broad range of face-to-face skills and sensitivities to communicate necessary information to improve schools for students.

Within the total scope of the assistance work of the Eugene/Oakland Region, the TA-Doc Linker placed a relatively greater importance upon retrieving useful information from written resources (especially the written field data, the case studies, and descriptive and analytical papers) than through face-to-face exchanges with the project's human resources. Because written resources cannot store as complex information, instantly reorganize information, or maintain as great currency of information as can human resources, the TA-Doc Linker at Eugene was unable to keep up with much of the new information coming into the DTA system during the second phase.

While also placing importance upon the documentary resources of the DTA project (e.g., King, 1977), the Chicago TA-Doc Linker placed greater emphasis on people as sources of information. Since the Documentation Team leader, the research coordinators, the data manager and coders, the project director and his staff, and the Study Team leader and his staff were all based in the Chicago office, frequent face-to-face exchanges of information, both formal and informal, were possible. The Chicago TA-Doc Linker also took initiatives to build and maintain telephone and face-to-face contacts with site researchers, participants at the nine sites, and NIE Project Officers for the nine sites, to maintain currency and fill in gaps in her understanding of information which might be useful to the assistance team. While proximity was certainly a factor in the Chicago TA-Doc Linker's more extensive use of face-to-face contacts to keep up with research information, a differing valuation of the importance of face-to-face and documentary information sources also seems to exist between the two regions. It should be said that keeping up with such a vast body of information was itself an impossible task to fulfill, and each TA-Doc Linker had to set limits within the context of her/his total role in the extent to which this activity was emphasized.

Another area of contrast between the two Linkers' actual role is in the extent to which each took initiatives to acquaint him/herself with the contexts of both research and assistance sites. The Eugene/Oakland assistance effort involved several sites, only some of which Phil visited. While Yvonne became acquainted with all the Chicago sites, she had fewer to visit and they were more accessible. Yvonne placed greater emphasis on the importance of visiting both research and assistance sites to understand the contexts into which information about site realities, traditions, and needs fit.

A related contrast has to do with the extent of mediation by the TA-Doc Linker between research information and the assistance team and by the assistance team between research information and site people. Yvonne took advantage of the Region team's location to facilitate direct access to sources of information by the assistance team. For instance, she not only encouraged all team members to participate in reading the case studies, but she also arranged a meeting between the coders and the assistance team, and encouraged team members to talk directly with Documentation Team staff and others to seek information. She assisted in matching needs for information with sources. She also helped bring people from DTA and the nine sites into direct contact with people in the assistance site through workshops and meetings. As an indirect result of one of Yvonne's initiatives, to bring together research site related people and assistance site people, a Chicago region assistance school became a sister school with a school at one of the nine sites, entering a relationship of sustained direct exchange of information between the two schools.

Information from the nine sites was more tightly mediated by the Eugene-based group. No face-to-face human resources beyond the Eugene/Oakland region from either DTA or the nine sites were introduced to assistance site people in Oakland. While information sharing was direct and free within the Eugene-based group itself in planning and in analyzing assistance strategies, the two Oakland-based assisters were largely cut off from this information flow.

The final area of contrast under consideration here has to do with support and authority for the TA-Doc Linker role. Because of its own heavy workload, the Documentation Team was usually unable to support the TA-Doc Linker role by taking initiatives to make information available in

useful form. Yvonne, however, was able to maintain a mutually supporting and informing dialogue with members of the Documentation Team, partly because of proximity, while Phil operated more autonomously, making inquiries through the Data Manager when he did his extensive computer inquiry, but not maintaining frequent contact and exchange of ideas with members of the Documentation Team.

The issue of support and authority for the TA-Doc Linker role from the assistance team does not arise so long as the Linker is functioning as a part of a strongly integrated and successfully collaborative team. Issues of support and authority within the team did not arise between Phil and other members of the Eugene-based group. In the Chicago Region, however, where some team conflict existed, there was some disagreement as to who should set priorities on the activities of the TA-Doc Linker--Yvonne herself, the Team Leader, or the team as a whole.

Issues for Future Work

The TA-Doc Linker role has been useful to both technical assistance regions in their Phase II work. It has developed in two of many possible directions. Certain issues concerning the role have emerged from the experience of the project so far. These ongoing questions can be asked at the beginning and throughout the next rounds of technical assistance work within DTA where the TA-Doc Linker role is again utilized.

- How can the conflict between assistance team building and site needs be productively resolved to maximize the usefulness of the TA-Doc Linker role?
- How can the TA-Doc Linker most effectively keep abreast of information coming into the system? By reading all data and papers? By talking with others about data? By visiting sites? To what extent is it productive to keep up with new information?

- For what kinds of assistance tasks and activities are documentary sources of information more useful? For what kinds are face-to-face sources more useful?

- To what extent should the TA-Doc Linker mediate (and encourage his/her assistance team to mediate) information flow from the research sites to the assistance sites? Where can direct access by the latter to the former be useful? How extensively do personal and team frames of reference and priorities screen out aspects of information which could be useful to the sites?

- Should the Documentation Team take more responsibility for making information available to the TA-Doc Linkers?

- Who prioritizes the activities of the Linkers? The Linkers themselves? The Team leaders? The team as a whole? How can the Linker's priorities be productively matched with those of others on the team and with site needs?

- What constraints impinge on the TA-Doc Linker role out of the fact of geographic separation from assistance sites? What kinds of information use are possible from a distance? What kinds are not?

In conclusion, the TA/Doc linker role is part of the DTA project's overall attempt to encourage and support information exchanges between researchers and practitioners. This role is highlighted in this paper because it exemplifies one of the more concentrated ways in which this project has created roles to support this type of information exchange.

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